American Women Missionaries and Pioneers Collection

Part 1: Missionaries

The Lyrel Teagarden Papers, 1921-1951

Series I a

Correspondence

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Correspondence,
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Luchowfu, via Wuhu, An.
April 26, 1930.

Dearest Abey:

Once more I come a penitent sinner. Abraham's bosom is filled with remorse most of the time.

To begin at the end, let me acquaint you with the fact that you are a very specially honorable member of the Pu I Shae. Herewith a receipt for $30.00 Mex., signed by Chen I-hwa, one of the secretaries of the organization. She wanted me to write your name and the amount in English, so you could be sure to read it. The Pu I Shae, translated into English, is the Community Welfare Institute. It was organized by the local Christians just about the same time that your very liberal check arrived. The program of the Institute is carried on by contributions from members of the Institute both in and outside of the church. Making a contribution automatically makes one a member of the organization. The amounts vary from

$1.00 to $30.00, the latter being known as a "helping" membership, as anyone who gives that much is a substantial help in the carrying on of the organization. Since the $25.00 you sent changed for more than twice that amount Mrs., and since this seemed like a worthy cause, I thought you wouldn't mind being connected with the movement by donating a part of the proceeds of your checks for this purpose. I have already used a part of the balance to purchase some much-needed literature for our Chinese library at the Women's Center, and I shall use the rest in the interests of the women's evangelistic works. We are all very grateful indeed for this generous help. It certainly is good of you to remember us so frequently. I think the Chinese friends look upon you as a sort of fairy godmother who is always appearing in the form of greatly-desired sums of money at just the right time. You seem to be an infallible proof that prayer is answered.

As for the Pui Shai, it is an organization somewhat on the order of the Y. M. and Y. W. C. A. It aims to help meet the spiritual, mental, physical and social needs of the community. (guess intellectual sounds a little better, though!) There are four playgrounds for children, recreation halls for men and women, reading and game rooms, evening schools for the illiterate, health campaigns, Bible classes and discussion groups, English classes, occasional moving picture performances, opportunities to hear radio programs, and a half-day school for women and girls, the courses of which include not only the reading and writing of Chinese but also machine-sewing, stocking knitting (by machine), embroidery, and foreign baking. These activities are carried on at four or five different centers. So much active interest is being shown on the part of non-Christians as well as the local church membership that it bids fair to be a real success. People who have never before shown the slightest interest in the church are coming regularly now to religious meetings

and are accepting this organization as a concrete example of what Christianity can do for a community. There are many things about it that are not running smoothly as yet, and many ideals which can't be attained immediately, but it is at least a beginning, and we missionaries are doing our best to help out as best we can. I spend a good deal of my time in playground work. It is most interesting, though somewhat strenuous. We have health meetings and demonstrations for the children, story hours, worship periods, group games, and the play periods, which are always supervised. The children are so responsive - so much more so than their elders - that it is a joy to work with them. And the mothers greatly appreciate having a safe, clean place for their children to play. Our equipment isn't complete yet, but we expect to add some with the help of the Pie I Shai contributions. So far we have four rope swings, a lawn swing, two see-saws, a slide, a sand table with buckets and spades, and several rocking horses. The playgrounds at the other centers have about

the same sort of equipment. The one at the Women's Center was the first to be started, and was established in memory of Lanra Lynne's mother.

Lanra Lynne is getting better slowly but surely - at least we all hope it is surely. She is still in Memphis, and is hoping to come back to China at the end of the summer. It has been a long, hard pull without her.

I've chopped my hair off again. Didn't seem to be able to find time to comb it as often as I needed to in order to look respectable, especially after I took up the playground work. It's a lot simpler this way, and so many of the Chinese have short hair now that it is no novelty here any more. Suppose I shall look like a freak when I go home, for I hear long hair is the style now. Well, I can grow it in again if I need to in order not to disgrace the family.

Wenona, Lillian and I have taken upon ourselves a new charge. A boy baby about a year old was left on the door-step of the hospital, and a

neighbor woman found him and brought him to us. Both his feet are deformed, and his legs a mass of horrible scars, evidently from a bad scalding. He was nearly starved to death, but had no disease except a bad case of rickets from under-nourishment. We are keeping him at the hospital where the student nurses are looking after him and getting him fattened up, after which Dr. Johnson will see what an operation can do for his feet. He will probably always be lame, but if he can walk at all it will be something. We think that some family will be willing to adopt him if the operation is successful. It is quite unusual for a boy baby to be thrown away. He is a darling baby, and as happy as can be to find himself comfortable and protected, with enough to eat. Wenona and I think Mephibosheth would be a good name for him, on account of his being lame in both his feet. Then, if we ever got a girl we could call her Elizabeth, and they could be Fib and Lib (or Fibbie and Libbie) for short, or else Beth and Sheth. But Lillian won't hear to it. She suggests Paul, because of the uniformity

of the flesh.

The last time I wrote to you we were in the midst of a drought. Now we are having a flood just for a change. After almost a year without any rain at all, it began to snow early in December and kept it up for about three months. Then it began to rain, and it has rained ever since. The wheat crop is ruined and if the rain doesn't stop soon, the rice will be a failure also. The country people are desperate. It is no wonder they turn to banditry. There seems to be no way for them to keep alive except to prey on other people's possessions. We had some guests over Christmas, snowbound here for about three weeks - a C. I. M. missionary and his daughter, who was trying to get home from school for the holidays. When they finally could get away for their cross-country trip over the snow, they were taken by bandits - or rather, the little girl was, to be held for ransom. Her father insisted on going along with her, and when the bandits shot at his feet, trying to frighten him away, he told them to go ahead and kill him - bid he a lot

happier dead than he was right then. When they saw they couldn't get rid of him, and also that the little girl couldn't manage Chipstiche very well (they didn't want her to starve to death on their hands!) they let her go, but took all of their belongings.

Our mail was snow-bound and ice-bound until long after Christmas. The boats that most of our Christmas packages were on didn't get through until February. Your present arrived just in time for Valentine's day, and was much appreciated. You just can't imagine how good it tasted. I had been longing for some home-side candy all winter, and this was delicious. Thanks you ever and ever so much.

I have three of your letters before me, as yet unanswered - dates Oct. 20, Dec. 9, and Jan. 17 respectively. In the first one you asked me if I was married or about to be. Nothing doing. There have been enough weddings in the family lately to last quite a while. As for unattached men in this corner of the universe, they're as scarce as the proverbial

hers teeth. Well, my family and yours, too, it seems. Blessings on your sister, and may they live happily ever after. I don't seem to remember the "foreign gentleman." Did I see him when I was there? Too bad your mother isn't happy about it. He certainly has some excellent qualities and qualifications.

You spoke of a newspaper picture of the Lytle family. Someone sent one to me - I believe it was Mother. It is a most interesting and good-looking family.

Won't it be great if you can go to France this summer! Tell me more about it. You just barely mentioned it as a possibility in your latest. Prof. Perry's Virginia tour sounds interesting, too. I haven't yet decided how I'm going back on my next furlough (two years from now). It costs about the same East or West. I'd like to go by rail across Siberia and Russia, visit Norway and Sweden and possibly Scotland and Ireland before sailing from England, but I'd want company, and there is no telling how safe travel will be

by that route. I hardly care to go by the tropics again. Probably I'll end by crossing the Pacific in the shortest time possible. I'll be anxious to get home, of course, but it is fine to see new things on the way. At any rate, unless I go a long way 'round and spend a good deal of time sightseeing on the way, I ought to be home at least by August of 1930, and probably wouldn't be starting back before August, 1931. So we could take our turn either the latter part of the summer of '30, or the first part of the summer of '31. I suppose '31 would be the better gamble. I can't run off just as soon as I get home. Perhaps we can do Bethany Commencement again in '31 and take our trip after that.

About the "thing" I sent you for Christmas. It's the embroidery from the sleeves of an old Mandarin coat. I found it in Peking last summer. They are supposed to be somewhat rare now, and Peking is the place to find them. I'll not be going to Peking again in dear knows when, but it is possible

I could find something in Shanghai this summer. If I could get the pieces of embroidery just as they came from the sleeves, - not made up with a binding as (or was it lined? - I forget) I believe the one was that I sent you, I could probably be more likely to get them at a reasonable price. Would your friend care for them unfinished? She could then make them up in whatever size and shape she chose. I'd like an idea of the colors she would prefer - some are blue, some old rose, some a bright pink, etc. The worst of it is that they are apt to be faded or soiled, or both. They are antiques, and rarely in perfect condition. As for the price, I have not much of an idea what one would have to pay in Shanghai. If I happened on to someone who was anxious to sell, I might get a pair for as little as a dollar or two Mex. - unfinished, of course. I should say that two dollars Gold ought to purchase the three pairs of sleeves not made up; but if she wants them already made up with silk or satin binding, she had better send three

or four dollars. I'm not sure that either the raw or the finished would be satisfactory, but I'll be glad to see what I can find, anyway. I may be 'way off on the price, too. To tell the truth, I don't remember what I paid for yours, but I thought the design unusually interesting. The figures illustrate scenes from the Chinese classics. The man standing on his hands is performing antics for the amusement of his aged father - a famous story in the Book of Filial Piety. Most of the sleeve-pieces that I have seen have flower designs, with perhaps some birds, butterflies, etc. Let me know if your friend wants me to look for something for her. It won't be a bit of trouble, for I expect to spend some time in Shanghai this summer, and I love to hunt around the shops. Sorry I can't be more definite about what she can expect. Let me know if there is anything else that you would like me to do for you or anyone else in Shanghai. It is a good place to shop, and there are things there from almost every part of China.

I was quite surprised to see my own ugly mug in your church bulletin. Broadcasted over the country, evidently, for someone else sent me one from Baltimore. It makes me feel like a nut, for I'm anything but a heroine.

We listened in on the Naval Conference the evening of the morning it was held. That's all I can say for it, though, for it was listening only - not hearing. We managed to make out a few words here and there in various languages. Unsatisfactory but thrilling nevertheless. It was relayed (if that's what you call it - I doubt it) through the Netherlands, Java, and the Philippines.

Your fine shows in one fell swoop sound good to me. We'll be doing something like that in Shanghai this summer if all goes well.

Mother and Father B. are taking a trip to the West coast this spring, by auto. They expect to be gone about three months. Were to have started the first part of April. Leonard and Nettie Smith, whom you may remember, are with them. They will visit some relatives in California and Uncle Alex and the other relatives in Colorado. They will be having a wonderful time, no doubt.

Elmer and Babe will be moving to Springfield, Mass. in a short time, if they carry out the plans they were making this spring. It would be an easy thing to start out "on their own" but they decided to do so in preference to keeping on with the hospital work. It is a wise decision, I'm sure. Babe writes the nicest letters to me. I'm so glad I have her as a sister-in-law.

The bottom of the page is usually the place where I sign my name, so here goes. I love you.

Alice.

Permanent (more or less) address:
Suchowfu, via Wuhu, An.

Hankow, China,
July 19, 1932.

Dearest Ibsibus, -

This habit of not writing letters is as bad as opium, or worse. At least one is supposed to have a grand and glorious feeling from opium. but this habit of mine brings naught but discomfort. So watch me break it by bringing along a small suit-case full of unanswered letters for my summer vacation.

Just before I started from Suchowfu, and while gathering together several hundred letters which I am going to answer this summer, I unearthed the first page of one which I started to you last November but never finished. I couldn't find the second page, though there was one originally. I'll enclose page 1 and leave the rest to your imagination. It was supposed to have been sent to reach you at Christmas time in lieu of a present, for I didn't send any gifts last year. When I couldn't get it finished

on time I gave it up altogether. Now come along and miss me. I deserve the worst you can give me. And I certainly didn't deserve that perfectly beautiful slip you sent me for Christmas. It is a dream, and as the Chinese say, you shouldn't have wasted your money on such an unworthy person. And I never did finish thanking you, at least on page 1, November last, for the gifts of the Christmas before. But I haven't forgotten how delicious that candy was, and I am still using the comb-cleaner, which is a very handy article.

Now that the gifts have been mentioned, let's talk about the giver. Dear old Boy! I'm so sorry to hear about your asthma and other ills. Asthma must be one of the most uncomfortable complaints they-is. I hope that doctor that put so many pounds on the boy you wrote about will help you this summer. Not that I can see you

weighing 190, but there probably isn't much danger, especially if you keep on going supperless very often. It must be awfully hard to work when you are feeling so miserable. Lama Lynne is a wonder to me, and so is everyone else who does so much in spite of poor health. I'm practically no good if I have so much as a pain in my little finger. If I really got sick I suppose I should give up entirely.

You must be sure and get cured before I get home, for you know that New England trip - oh, yes, and Chicago. I don't see why we can't meet at Chicago next summer, do the Exposition up brown, and take our New England jaunt the next summer. The reason I think it might be better to do the two in two different years is because I reckon the home folks might think it a little queer if I should start forth on a tour about as soon as I reached home. I

shall probably be sailing from Shanghai some time in July and arriving in U.S.A. about the first of August, or possibly a little sooner. Mother and Father B. may meet me on the coast and if so I'm sure they will be for taking in the exposition on the way East. Before I knew that they were planning to come to meet me, and before I knew about the postponement of furlough, cuts in salary, etc., I had been considering going home by way of Siberia and Norway. In case the folks can't come to meet me, how would you like to meet me in the Land of the Midnight Sun next summer? We could go back through Scotland, Ireland and England, or any other route if you have any favorites. I haven't suggested such a plan to the folks at home, for I understand that Father B. dislikes travel by boat, so I'm sure they wouldn't consider taking a

trip to Europe. And I know they want very much to go by auto to the west coast and meet me there. But the other might be a possibility in case the auto trip doesn't materialize. What say? Travel is cheap now, and it doesn't seem to cost much more to live in one place than another. And what's the use of saving up a lot of wealth (on our school teacher's and missionary's salaries!) when we haven't any grandchildren? Have a good time, say I, and see as much of God's world as you can.

2) We are not hoarding much wealth this summer. Lanna Lyrene, Winona, Lillian and I are on our way up the Yangtze Gorges, over the rapids, to Chungking, Szechwan. It bids fair to be an interesting trip, with perhaps a thrill or two. Not that we are courting danger, but if the bandits shoot at our boat and the rapids prove quite rapid

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it is all in a vacation, and it would be hard to pick out any place in this country that would guarantee one an entirely safe and sane summer. We always feel, after we have weathered the trip from Luchowfu to Wuhu, that we can stand almost anything, for nothing could be much worse. This time we had only two days and two nights of concentrated misery, for we were able to come by launch. Otherwise we would have had a week or two by sailboat, with the wind dead against us as it almost always is this time of year. As it was, the soldiers took the cabins we had engaged. In fact the launch itself was commandeered by a band of disbanded soldiers who had been defeated while fighting the Communists near Luchowfu. They left us a sort

of barn-loft chicken-coop, hardly large enough for us to stretch out in while lying down, which was most of the time, for there was not space between the floor and the boards above for us to stand up, or even to sit upright without bumping our heads. We piled our baggage into one corner in as small a space as possible and sprawled about on top of each other like so many animals. The bedbugs were even worse than usual. We sprayed "Flit" around freely and that stunned some of them enough so that we could gather them up in newspapers and dump them overboard. Mr. Corpron says that the old-time missionaries always said, when starting on a journey, "Let us pray." Now we say, "Let us spray." Besides the bedbugs we had cinders in large quantities, from the smoke stack which was

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directly in front of us. Our "Cabin de Luft"
was reached by climbing up on top of the
deck rail, dangling in mid-air from a
wire suspended above, and executing a
handspring backwards and upwards.
We spent a day and a night in Wuhu,
getting ourselves cleaned up and re-moral-
ized, then traveled for three nights and
two days on a heavenly British river-
steamer to Hankow, where we are waiting
for a smaller steamer bound for the upper
Yangtze. The round trip between here and
Chungking takes about two weeks. We expect
to stop in Kuling for a few days on our
way down river, for a breath of coolness
in the mountains. It is hot here in Hankow
- 92° to 95° degrees in the shade - but
there is usually a good breeze from the
river, and we have electric fans in our
rooms. We are staying at the Lutheran Mission

Home, a much more modern and convenient place than the Missionary Home in Shanghai. The manager is the husband of a girl I used to know in Nyack.

Yesterday we went to see the school for the blind in Wuchang, the city just across the river from Hankow. It is carried on by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. It is now their vacation time, and many of the students had gone home for the summer, but there were about thirty there still. They assembled in the chapel, and one of them played the organ while the others sang. They showed us how they learn to write and read, and asked us to give them problems in arithmetic for them to work. They do beautiful knitting. There is a blind girl in Tsuhoofu who we are hoping can go either to this school or to the one in Shanghai. She is a beautiful girl and she herself is anxious to go to school, but her grandmother

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is greatly opposed to it. Instead, she is having the girl take lessons in fortune-telling - a questionable occupation for a young girl but practically the only thing open to a blind person except begging or going away from home. This girl is about fifteen years old and unusually attractive. We are still hoping that we can persuade the family to send her to an institution.

We are enjoying being in a port city for a few days. The Navy Y. M. C. A. is next door, with an attractive out-of-door ice cream parlor. We have taken in a movy or two and done a bit of shopping. Some Chinese friends in Wuchang took us to a Cantonese restaurant where we had some delicious and unusual dishes. One was a large melon filled with something like clam ~~broth~~ chowder without the clams. The broth was wonderful, and in it were lotus seeds,

mushrooms, several kinds of meat, and dear knows what else. One scoops out the inside of the melon and adds it to the chowder as one eats. The chicken-and-pineapple dish was good also.

I don't know how I am ever going to find out whether or not Guido is still in Hankow. He was here the last I knew, but no one here seems to know the names of the gun-boats, Italian or otherwise, that are in port, and I confess I haven't made much effort to do any investigating. I have even forgotten the name of his boat, but should recall it, I am sure, if I heard it. Wherever he is, he probably doesn't lack for ladies, though I doubt if he often meets up with New England spinsters who will go just so far and then amaze him by going no farther. I did love to hear him sing Italian opera, but drew the line on the petting. He finally decided that I must be

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something like a nun, though dressed in garments of the world.

That was strange news you wrote about Prof. Workman. What fools these old ones can be! Aren't you glad you aren't married to one of 'em? I'm sure I should have a hard time keeping anybody straight, especially with secretaries about. They do seem to work such havoc.

It was interesting to hear about Cherub Saum's niece. I have an idea her father is more up and coming than his brother, though I really don't know a thing about it. I just can't imagine Cherub on the mission field - and maybe he didn't ever imagine himself there, either. I don't remember that he belonged to the Volunteer Band. By the way, isn't it strange how few of the Volunteers who belonged to the band when we were in Bethany ever went out as missionaries? In fact, not many of the missionaries I know

ever belonged to Volunteer Bands. I suppose that goes to show that the human race is prone to change its mind.

How are your mother and father now? I hope, as Aunt Jennie would say, that they are both "smart." Aunt Jennie herself seems to be getting along pretty well except for her deafness. She has a companion, not because she wants one, but because her relatives don't feel right about having her there all by herself. She had a fall this winter and had to have some stitches taken in her head, but didn't even have to go to bed because of it! She still writes interesting letters with its of her quaint humor in them.

I wonder if Mother has written you about Elmer's family troubles. Babe left

him about a year ago and Elmer doesn't expect her ever to come back. He is broken-hearted, of course, for he is very much in love with her - much more so, evidently, than she ever was with him. He doesn't seem to blame her in the least. It looks to me (at long distance) as if she got tired of waiting for a life of luxury. Apparently she made a great many demands which Elmer, just getting started in his profession, was unable to fulfill, and some of which he did fulfill against his own better judgment. At any rate, she is "on her own", in St. Louis the last I heard, and Elmer is still struggling along with few clients, or at least few paying ones. Mother wrote in her last letter that he was about to go back to

Rochester where he would be on a salary, though a small one. That would seem to be the wisest move, for it seems well-nigh impossible for a young doctor to get a good start by himself these days.

We are feeling the depression out here, too, but exchange is so favorable that we missionaries don't seem too hard hit. We had only five months' salary the first six months this year, no vacation allowance, and a ten percent cut beginning this month. The Chinese workers are taking cuts, too, and all the work budgets have been reduced. But it may be a blessing in disguise, if it leads the Chinese to realize the necessity of becoming self-supporting. Up to now they have talked and talked about it without getting anywhere. Now it looks more like something that is inevitable

and even desirable.

The work this year has been most encouraging, and interesting as well. We haven't done as much country work as we wanted to do, because of the bandetry throughout the country districts, but we go regularly to two or three villages not far from the city, and just this spring have re-opened an out-station about 25 miles away which had been closed for a number of years. An old evangelist and his wife and daughter have gone out there to live, and although the evangelist is supposed to be the leading worker, his daughter Martha is doing work which may prove more worth while and lasting than her father's. She has a half-day school for teen-age girls who have never before had an opportunity to go to school. The girls are most enthusiastic

over the school and their teacher, and are learning a great many things beside how to read and write. Through them their families are becoming interested in the church. There are only two Christian families in the village, including the evangelist's, and the place is one of the worst opium centers in the whole country. There is hardly a family that does not raise the plant and sell the drug, and most of the men smoke it. The school girls work in the fields gathering the juice mornings and come to school in the afternoon. I was there for several days in early June. One day there were four attempted suicides by opium, one of whom was a girl who had been a student in the school for a short time but later dropped out. Her mother scolded her for some trifle and the girl, who had saved out enough of the juice while she was gathering it for her

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family, took a large dose and died within a few hours. The other three, all men, were saved by some medicine administered by one of our Christian men. The countryside is simply beautiful when the poppies are in bloom. Instead of enforcing the law against it, the officials encourage the traffic. The farmers can't be blamed for raising it, for they get a much better price for it than for any other crop. And then, the people starve for lack of wheat and rice!

I seem to have begun and ended this letter with opium. At least I think I shall call this the end, though I haven't told much about what I have been doing all year. I don't want to wear you out, however, nor give you a spell of indigestion.

I enclose some snaps taken at Tsingtao last summer. We were taking a walk, and didn't have our bathing suits with us, so went in anyway. The one of me drying out is so much more modest than the others that I cut all the rest off. Are you shocked? Heaps o' love always from your Alice.